The state of customer centricity

A cxpartners study commissioned by Google

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Commissioned by
Google

Contents

The problem with customer centricity

With just 36% of organizations thriving from their customer-centric capability, most CEOs are leaving money on the table.

'The problem with customer centricity,' says Arjan Toor, CEO of Cigna Europe, a health insurance giant, 'is that everyone says they want it, but no one can tell you what it means.'

Author and UX consultant Jared Spool has a simple test: 'A customer centric organization is one where every decision is taken with the customer in mind.' In Spool's view, a customer centric organization will systematically align itself around the customers' needs. This affects every aspect of its behavior—from its choices of who to hire to which strategy to adopt. In other words, customer centricity is a mindset adopted by the executive leadership and baked deep into the organization's operating model.

We surveyed 110 businesses across Europe to discover how deeply customer centricity was embedded within their organizations. The results were eye-opening.

One common problem we found is that many firms assume that 'customer centricity' and 'customer service' are the same thing. In the lowest-performing organizations, it was left to front-of-house staff to look after customers. Meanwhile, headquarters was setting priorities and allocating resources based on factors that had little or nothing to do with improving customer value.

Yet our highest-performing organizations did meet Spool's test. The picture among them was of organizations where leadership had deliberately built a culture of customer centricity—making sure that everyone at the company regularly spoke with customers. They also made it their job to listen to front-line staff providing them with the tools they needed to do their jobs better. Finally, they brought these efforts together in a coordinated and methodical way.

When we correlated our results with company performance, we found something remarkable (Figure A). The companies that scored the highest had higher annual revenue growth, higher employee satisfaction and could implement change faster than the companies at the bottom end of our scale (see page 9 - The Advantage).

Only **36%** of organizations are truly customer centric

FIGURE A
Customer centricity maturity vs average YOY revenue growth

High maturity. (Scores of 4 to 5)   **Low maturity.** (Scores of 1 to 3)

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity
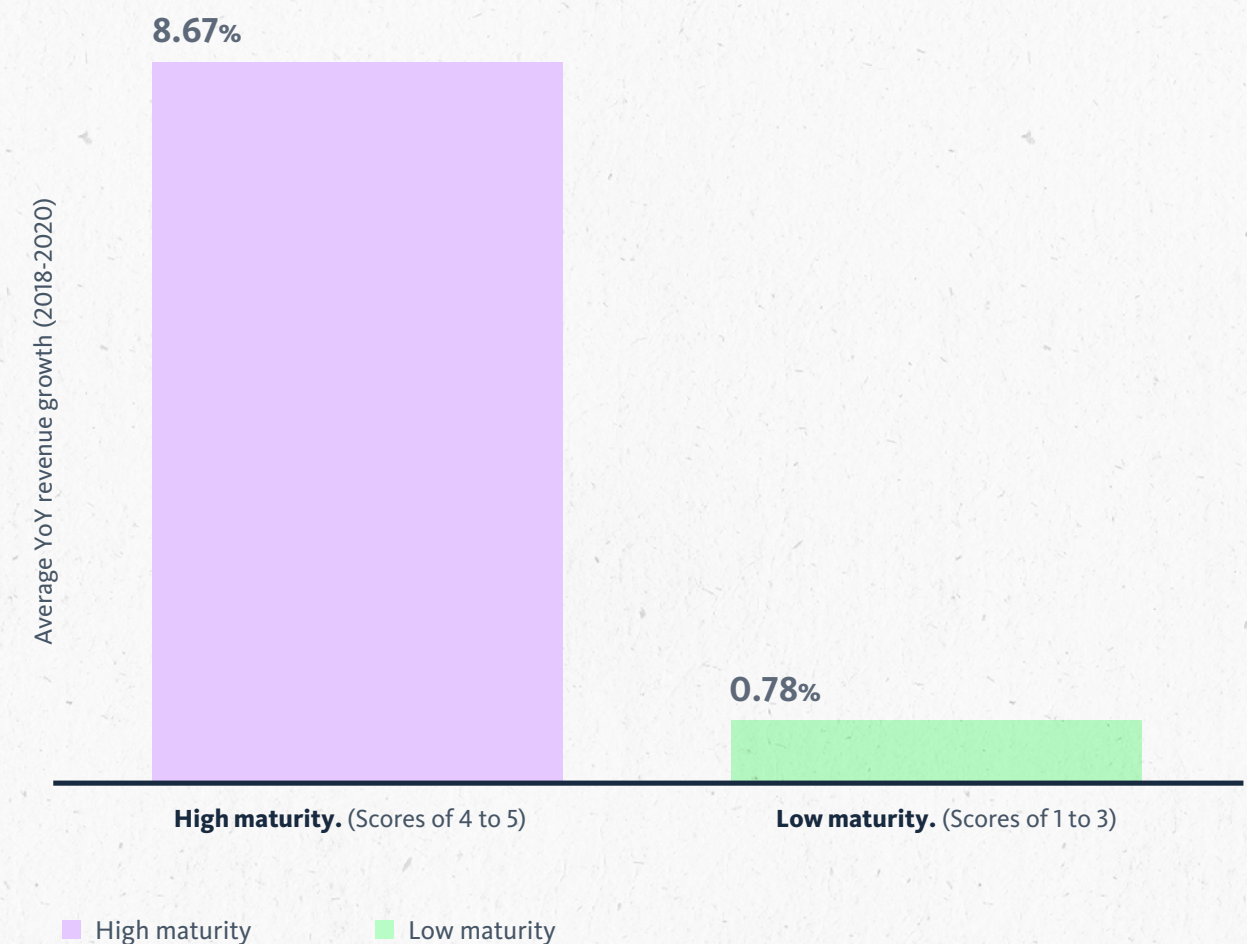
In this report, you'll find five key insights from our survey that will help you to answer the question: how can we be more customer centric? You can also use the customer centricity model to benchmark your organization - take the self-assessment here.

"

We want to help businesses deliver better experiences for their customers, so we asked 'how can we provide them with personalized advice to improve their capabilities?' The Customer Centricity Model is perfect for this. It gives a thorough assessment of capability, yet it is simple enough that leaders can quickly see where they need to focus. It's a tool for inspiring, leading and delivering change.

Noah Samuels,
VP EMEA Go To Market Operations,
Google

Google

How we measured customer centricity

Our maturity scale gives a quick measure of how far an organization has advanced on its journey from immaturity to maturity. The scale provides leaders a quick index of their progress. It also helps them benchmark their standing against peers and competitors.

Integrated

Considering and involving customers in all key business decisions. Speedy to react to changing user needs and are famous for their customer proposition and experience.

Performing

Use customer insight to inform strategic direction. Customer experiences rank highly amongst competitors and are updated to meet changing customer needs.

Defined

Some solid customer centered practices embedded in delivery processes. Products and services may be usable, but undifferentated within the market.

Emerging

Use some customer centered techniques to solve particular problems. Engage in limited user research or A/B testing to solve a specific problem.

Beginning

A business model focused on optimising static process. Customer centric practices like UX and research aren't fully understood or utilised.

5.0

Integrated

Performing

Defined

Emerging

Beginning
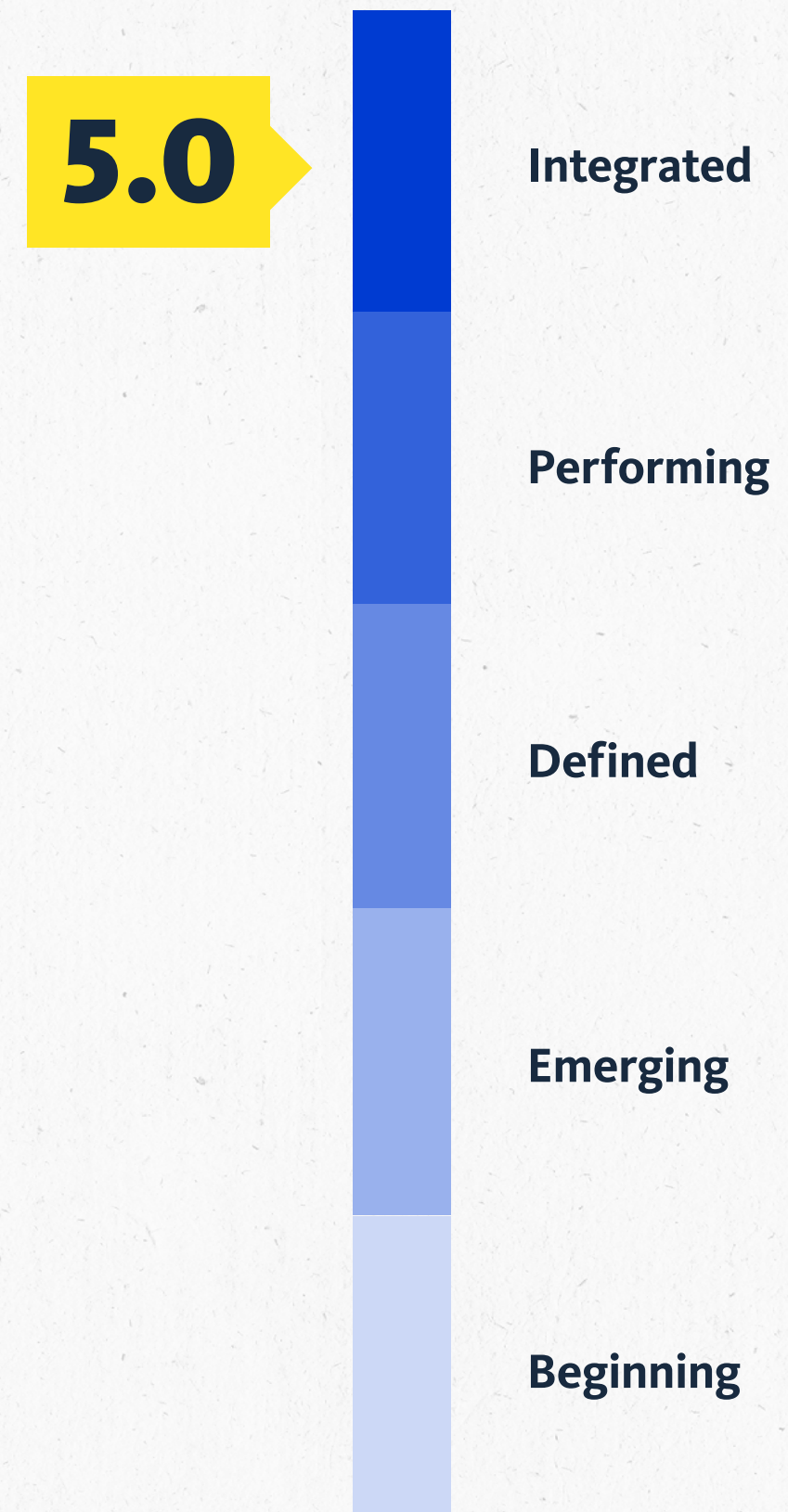
Five dimensions

To understand an organization's maturity, it is critical to scratch below the surface and assess its development across a broad range of capabilities. Our Customer Centricity Model organizes those capabilities into five dimensions. These cover everything from the way a company sets its strategy to the skills of its people. We have chosen these dimensions based on our experience of leading and supporting organizational change, and referencing widely used standards and frameworks.

Each dimension begins with basic capabilities (such as ensuring foundational skills are in place) and progresses to advanced capabilities (such as structuring the organization to ensure ease of access to those skills). Mature organizations have stronger capabilities in every dimension. Immature organizations will have fewer, less advanced capabilities. When growing capability, balance is crucial. Organizations that only focus on the skills of their people will become frustrated by poor processes, governance, and facilities.

The model provides an easy way for managers to identify what they need to do to unlock potential, increase capability, and grow maturity.

PEOPLE: Organizations have the right skills to deliver exceptional customer experiences. Organizational structure and culture support teams to perform well.

PROCESS: Strong processes prompt people to do the right things. Teams are empowered to focus on customer needs.

GOVERNANCE: Managers have the right methods to form clear strategies, evaluate performance, and prioritize resources to achieve the organization's goals.

FACILITIES: Teams have the right tools, facilities, suppliers, and environments (both physical and digital) to work effectively.

COMMUNICATION: The organization effectively communicates its objectives, provides rapid feedback on progress and problems, and shares information about opportunities and constraints.

Governance
2.2

Facilities
4.1

Process
1.6

People
2.3

Communication
2.0

Customer Centricity Model
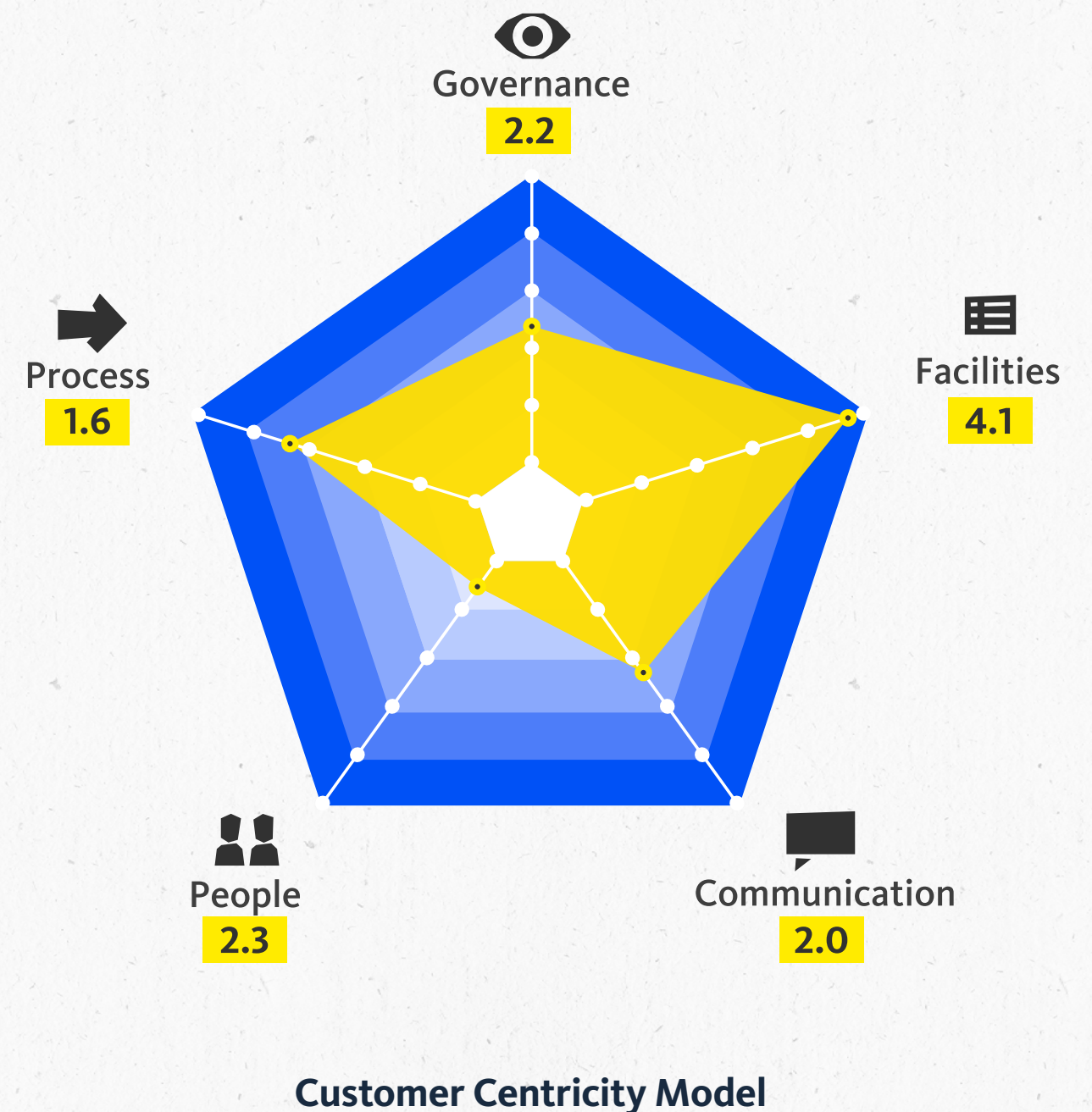
About the study

We created a self-assessment survey based on the Customer Centricity Model. It covered every aspect of the organization across each of the five dimensions (above). We refined the survey by testing it with a group of target users to ensure that the results accurately represented the organizations involved before releasing the survey to a wider cohort of respondents.

We engaged senior managers in over 100 organizations—including leaders in retail, finance, healthcare, utilities, travel, and telecommunications—and asked them to complete the survey. We targeted established organizations, with scale. 90% of the organizations surveyed were over 10 years old and, on average, have 24,000 employees (including six organizations with over 200,000 staff).

We cross-referenced data from the survey with financial and employee satisfaction data, comparing this against their customer centricity maturity scores. **The detailed methodology can be found here.**

The advantage

Customer centric organizations grow faster, have more satisfied employees and are more nimble.

We compared the organizations with the highest customer centricity maturity scores to those with the lowest. We looked at three performance measures that are crucial to businesses today: growth, employee satisfaction, and organizational agility. In each category, the most customer centric organizations came out on top.

Faster growth

The most mature organizations in our study grew nine times faster than the rest. Organizations with high maturity (four or five on our five-point scale) had an average annual growth rate of 8.6%. Organizations with low to medium levels of maturity (zero to three on our scale) averaged 0.6% growth.

We think there are two reasons for this. First, customer centric organizations are more likely to retain customers—so growth starts from a strong place. Second, customers are more likely to recommend those organizations—accelerating growth.

More satisfied employees

At a time when businesses are desperate to attract and retain the best talent, employee satisfaction matters. Over 90% of the highest-maturity organizations reported high employee satisfaction. Just 20% of low-maturity organizations had high employee satisfaction. Our findings align with analysis from Gallup, covering 230 organizations across 73 countries, which found a strong correlation between employee satisfaction and customer loyalty.

We think there are two reasons for this. First, customer centric operating models give employees a clear mission that gives their work meaning. Second, there's a greater sense of autonomy when employees are trusted to do what is best for the customer. Whatever the reason, there's a strong link between employee satisfaction and customer centricity.

9x
Revenue growth

90%
Have highly
satisfied employees

More nimble

We found that the vast majority of low-maturity organizations (69%) take years to change their systems and operations. Meanwhile, a similar proportion of high-maturity organizations (65%) took just weeks or months to make changes.

We think that agility comes down to two things. First, we found that high-maturity organizations focused on the customer impact of their technology choices rather than cost or internal politics. Second, high-maturity organizations were able to make better decisions faster (see *Five keys to customer centricity*, below).

Our study established that customer-centric organizations were overwhelmingly faster at delivering change.

65%

**Deliver changes
in weeks or
months not years**
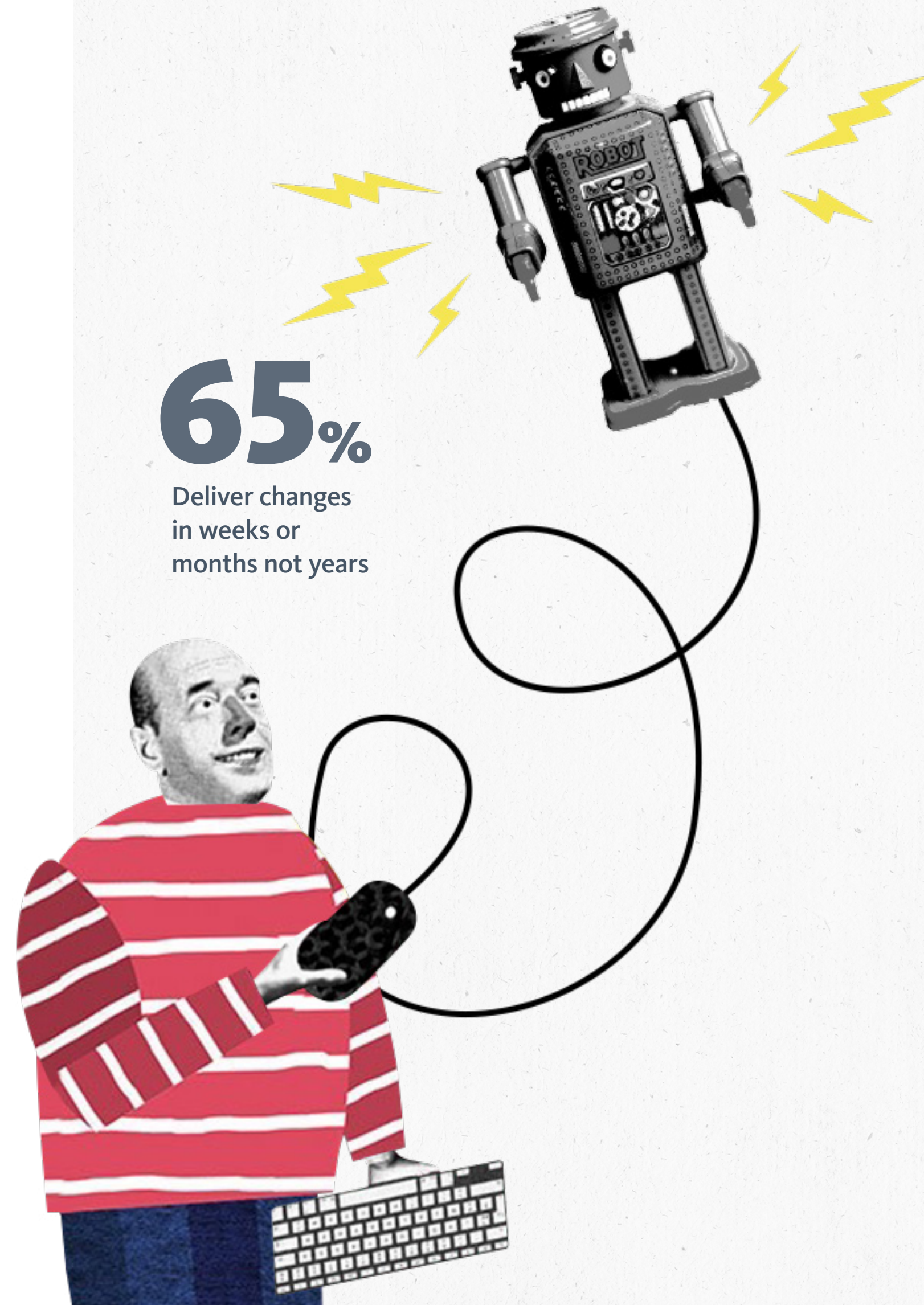
Five keys to customer centricity

Follow these surprisingly simple and actionable principles to develop a highly performing, customer centred organization, fast.

Before anything, lead on curiosity about customers' lives

The high performing organizations we spoke to all had a strong sense that their mission was to deliver value to customers. For the people working in the organization, the day-to-day experience was that the organization was always trying to learn about its customers: what mattered to customers, how did they behave, and how could the organization improve what it was doing for them? That meant the high performing companies encouraged everyone to watch customers and talk to customers as much as possible.

Introducing the five keys

We found some clear distinctions when we looked at what separated high performers from low performers. We've called these the *five keys to customer centricity*. Organizations with these five features are likely to be high performers. We think that there are reasons that each key is associated with high performance: in each case, a customer centric approach is driving high performance.

The *five keys to customer centricity* shared by all high performers are:

1 **De-centralize control**

2 **Question everything, assume nothing**

3 **Prioritize employee experience**

4 **Adopt a customer centric org chart**

5 **Communicate relentlessly**

1 # De-centralize control

Give more autonomy to teams, and facilitate them in making decisions by listening to customers.

In our survey, high-performing organizations gave their teams more freedom to make their own choices (Figure B) balancing top-down and bottom-up decision-making. Low-performing organizations were strongly skewed towards top-down decision-making.

What's interesting is what the data says about how those decisions were split. Strikingly, none of the high-performing organizations rated key managers' concerns as 'very high priority' when making decisions on new products or features. High-performing organizations were far more interested in what customers said (Figure C). This position was reversed for low-performing organizations where the concerns of key managers were critical to decision making.

A balanced dialogue

The high-performing organizations that participated in our study told us that managers were focused on making sure teams were aligned to business strategy rather than pushing ideas of how to solve customer problems.

In other words, top-down decisions were about strategic priorities. Bottom-up decisions were about what worked—and especially what worked for customers. The picture this paints is of a structured and balanced dialogue between managers and delivery teams, with each side contributing where it has expertise.

High-performing organizations set different priorities to low-performing ones. Delegating control was not an act of blind faith. High-performing organizations told us they knew what processes and skills their teams needed to apply to get good outcomes. When managers checked in on the progress of projects, their main concern was: is this team applying processes correctly? If the team was, then the managers were confident that the team could be left to find the right answers.

FIGURE B
Where do decisions about a product or project's direction come from?

50%   25%   50%   75%

Bottom up. Delivery teams have the autonomy to make decisions

Top down. Managers have authority to make decisions
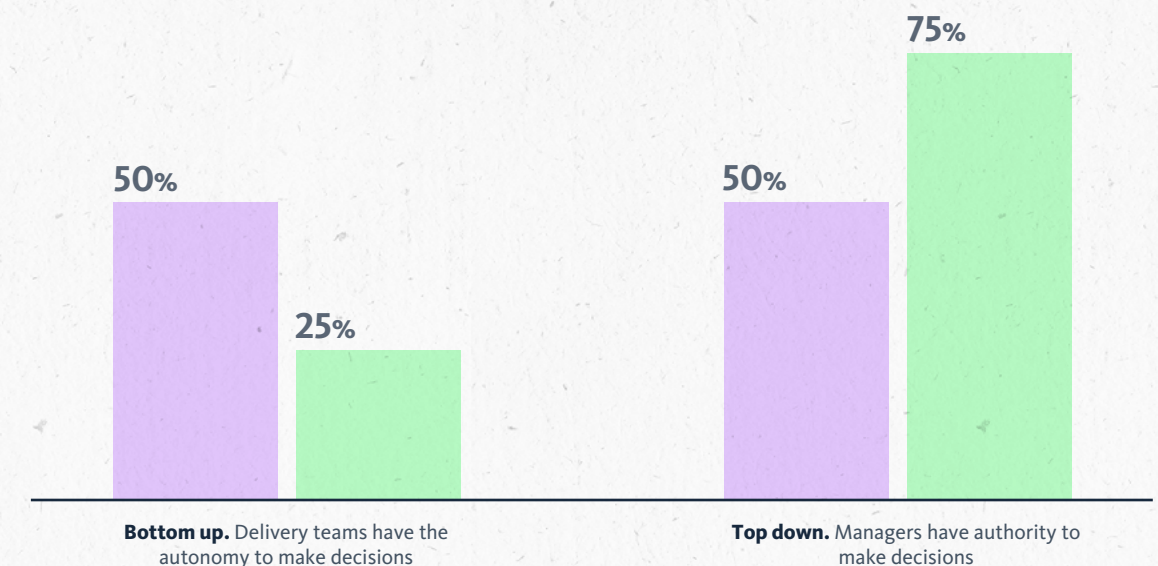
FIGURE C
Which of these is a higher priority when releasing new products or features?

76%   13%   9%   80%

It's been tested with users

Key managers' concerns are addressed

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity
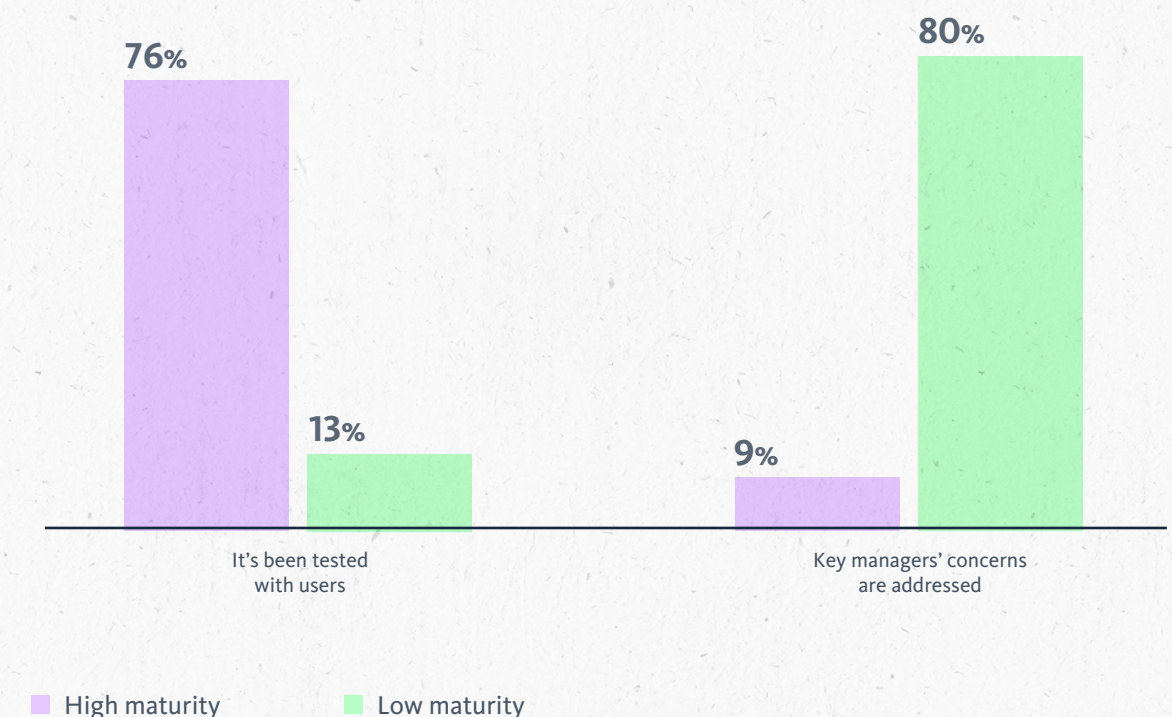
Faster, better

We think that de-centralizing control has two significant advantages.

First, decisions get made faster. De-centralized decision-making means less time waiting for decisions to be passed up and down the chain of command. We think this is one reason for the agility of high-performing organizations and the speed they can make changes.

Second, de-centralizing also means that decisions get made by people closer to the customer—because they can spend more time watching specific user research (as evidenced by the answers in our survey). This means that the decisions are of better quality.
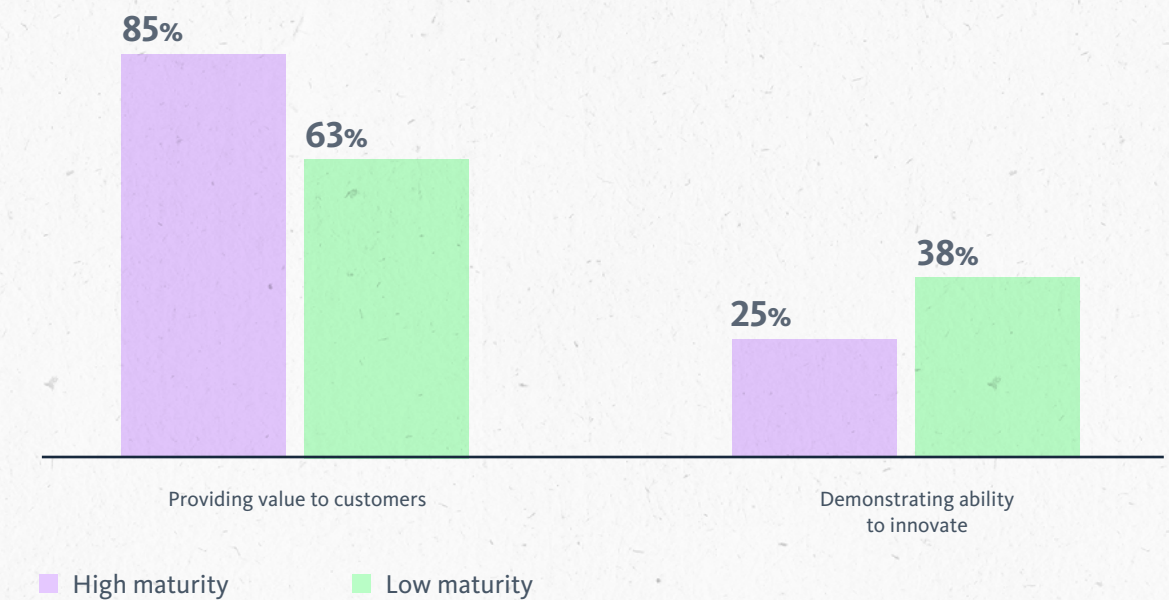
Certainly, de-centralizing, high-performing organizations were far more interested in providing value to customers, rather than being concerned with vague and subjective questions like 'how do we show we are innovative?' (Figure D). That clarity of mission—delivering value to our customers—makes it easy for managers in de-centralizing organizations to know that their teams are doing the right thing, even when they're not watching.

Key points

- High-performing organizations de-centralize control.
- A clear mission ('create customer value') and strong processes help organizations keep autonomous teams focussed.
- Governance should ensure that teams are aligned to strategy and follow effective processes.
- Teams should focus on finding solutions they can back with strong rationale.

FIGURE D

Which of these are a priority when delivering features?

85%
63%
25%
38%

Providing value to customers

Demonstrating ability to innovate

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity

2 **Question everything, assume nothing**

Use data to inform decision making
– at all levels of the organization.

"When I joined the board, what struck me was that we were a group of affluent, middle-aged people who knew a lot about financial services, but not much about our customers' lives," said one non-executive director at a financial services company we spoke to. "We had some data, but we lacked a visceral understanding of our customers. We went out to see for ourselves who our customers were. It totally changed our strategy."

This is just one example of another key feature of high-performing organizations: they were far more likely to seek out information to shape their decisions. This was true from top to bottom: whether setting strategy, shaping services, or prioritizing work.

Bring customer stories into the boardroom

In setting strategy, high-performing organizations were more likely to take into account market trends, customer data, and qualitative data (Figure E). It's in their use of qualitative data—customer stories—that the difference was greatest. Fewer than half of low-performing organizations brought customer stories into strategic meetings. More than three-quarters of high-performing organizations did this. The value of qualitative data is that it helps make sense of other forms of data by giving a visceral understanding of the customer. If quantitative data is the '*what*', qualitative data is the '*why*'.

In shaping products and services, again, there was a significant difference. We asked how organizations created roadmaps that set a vision for how their products and services should evolve. High-performing organizations were more likely to review customer complaints and take time to investigate user needs when considering how to develop products and services. Low-performing organizations were more likely to rely on senior managers' opinions or follow what they saw competitors doing (Figure F).

FIGURE E

When deciding the strategic direction and vision for the organization, what information and research do you gather?

	Market trend reports	Competitor reviews	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
High maturity	80%	78%	86%	79%
Low maturity	58%	60%	57%	40%
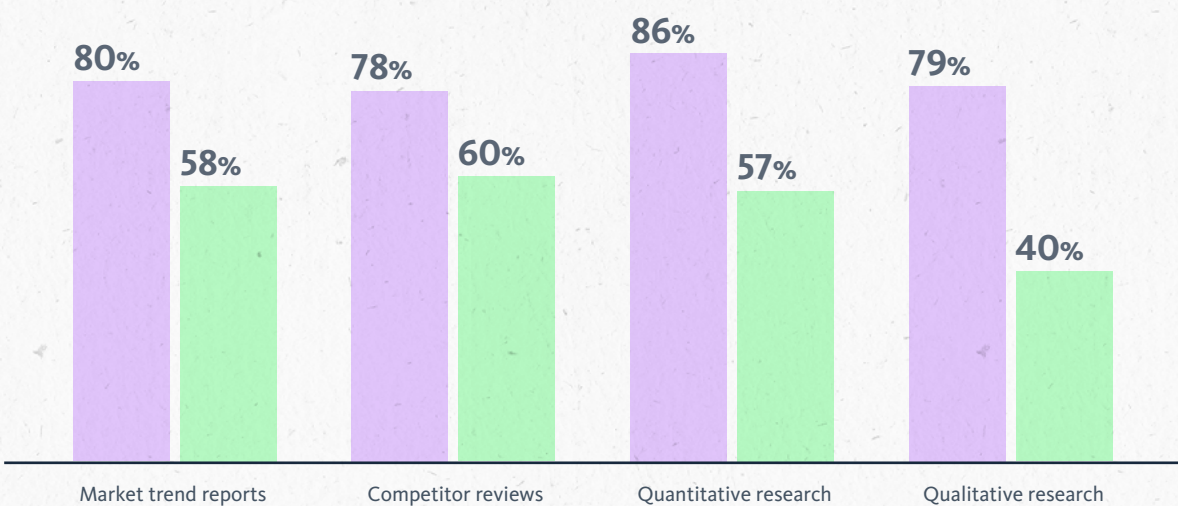
FIGURE F

What insight informs your product roadmaps?

	Goals of upper management, expertise of stakeholders and features of competitors	Complaints received about the product	Insights gathered on customer needs from several sources including primary research
High maturity	68%	45%	86%
Low maturity	90%	27%	31%

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity
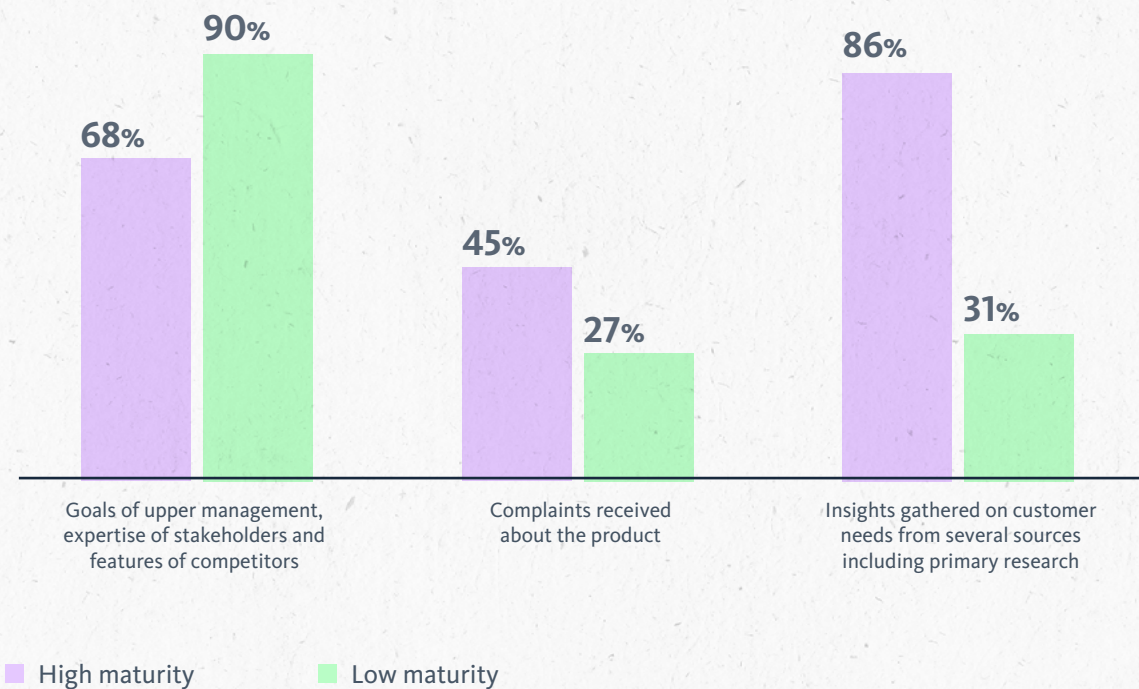
This thinking flowed through into the everyday fixes and improvements that teams were making. While all organizations in our study considered customer complaints, low-performing organizations were far more likely to be guided by management priorities (Figure G). What's more, low-performing organizations were far less likely to listen directly to customers—so those priorities were less likely to be informed by balanced research.
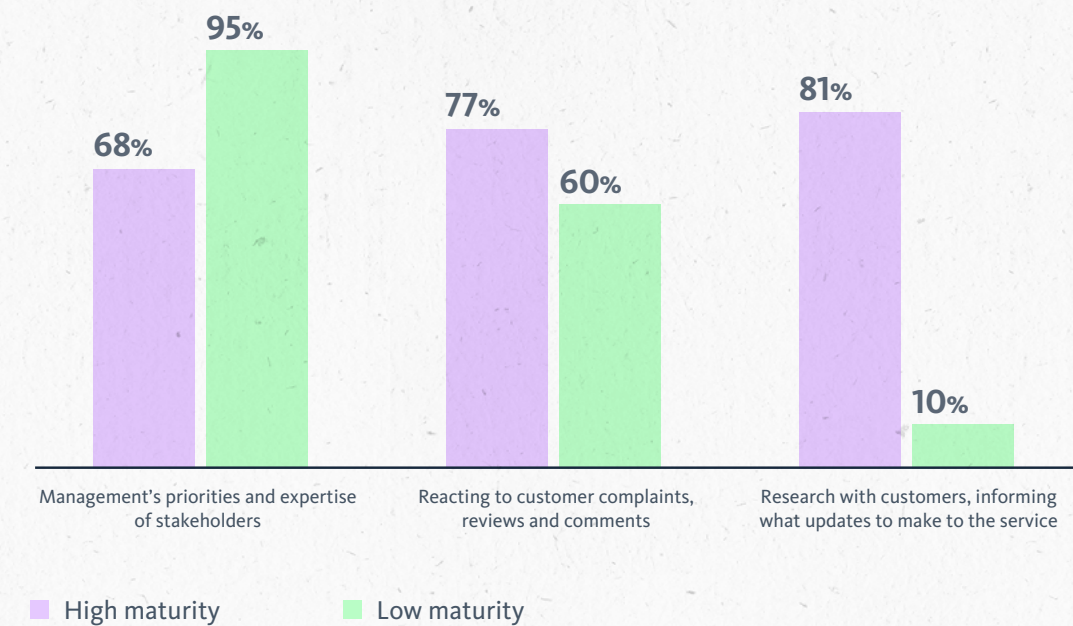
Make better choices

We believe the explanation for their superior performance is that data-informed organizations make better choices. The fact that we saw it at all levels suggests that high-performing organizations have a culture that rewards people for seeking out evidence and information—specifically, data and stories about their customers.

Being data-informed goes hand-in-hand with our first key of de-centralizing control. Organizations with centralized decision-making miss out on opportunities to be data-informed. Centralized organizations discourage teams from asking questions and instead rely on a few busy individuals to make decisions which reduces their bandwidth to gather and act on information.

Key points

- High-performing organizations have a culture of collecting information to make data-driven decisions.

- Qualitative data (customer stories) helps make sense of quantitative data.

- De-centralizing control increases an organization's ability to gather information and make better decisions.

FIGURE G
What insight informs your product backlogs?

Management's priorities and expertise of stakeholders — High maturity 68%, Low maturity 95%

Reacting to customer complaints, reviews and comments — High maturity 77%, Low maturity 60%

Research with customers, informing what updates to make to the service — High maturity 81%, Low maturity 10%

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity

3 ## Prioritize employee experience

Provide employees with the tools, technologies, and support that make it easy for them to deliver great customer experiences.

'You can't blame a team for not being customer centric if you don't give them the resources they need,' says Remi Guyot, Chief Product Officer of the ride-sharing service BlaBlaCar. He explains why he works hard to give his employees the right tools and facilities.

'If people feel that testing a prototype with customers means that they might miss their deadlines, then they won't test,' says Guyot. 'So we put a lot of work into finding usability agencies all over the world where we can contact them and be running a test in 48 hours. It required a lot of energy to remove the hurdles, but now it's barely any effort. Teams run the tests, and then they see how valuable they are, and that's transformed the behavior of our teams'.

We found that, like BlaBlaCar, high-performing organizations made sure their teams had the technology and resources to deliver the right outcomes for customers.

Experience-driven technology

Our study showed that high-performing organizations chose software and technology platforms based on customer outcomes. Budgets, politics, and personal opinion are secondary factors in decisions (Figures H1 and H2). Low-maturity organizations prioritize cost and political considerations when selecting software and technology.

In other words, high-performing organizations seem to be better at thinking about the impact of their decisions on customers, colleagues, and future work. Like BlaBlaCar, they seem to be able to work back from a desired outcome ('more user testing') to key performance indicators ('test within 48 hours') to putting the right tools and services in place. Low-performing organizations seem to underestimate the impact their choices will have on employees and ultimately on customers.

FIGURE H1

When deciding on technology or systems to integrate into the business, are choices frequently driven by financial and political reasons?
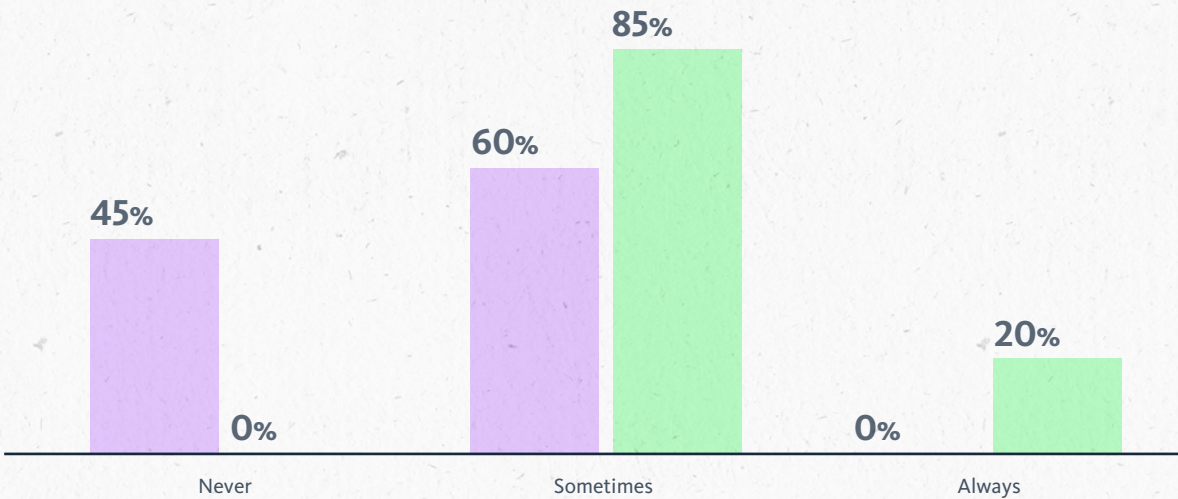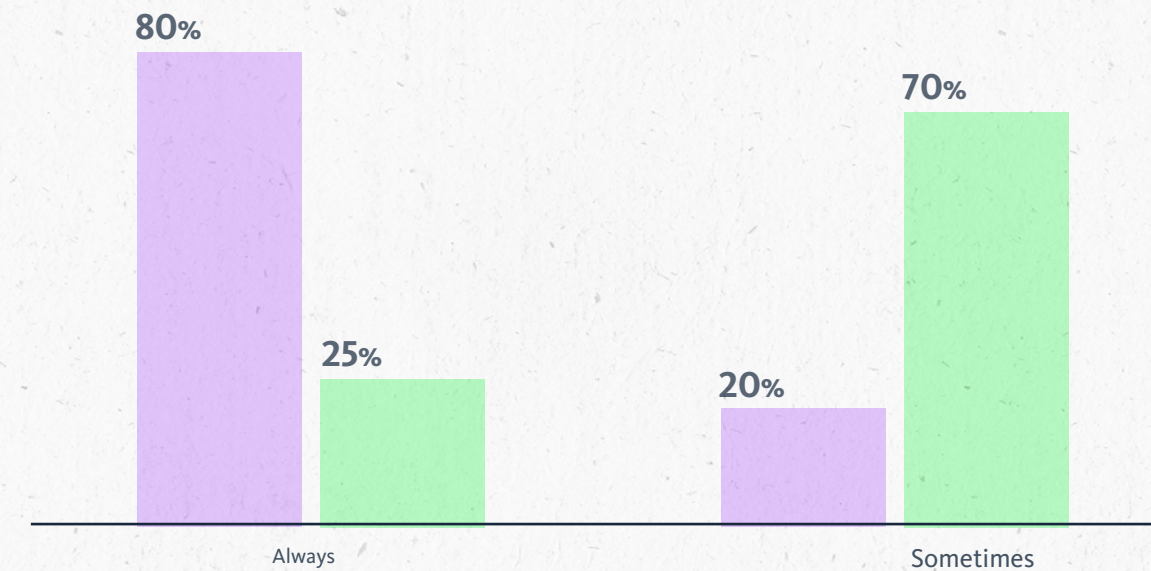

FIGURE H2

When deciding on technology or systems to integrate into the business, are decisions based on the outcomes for the business and the consumer?

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity

Technology strategy

High-performing organizations were far more likely to have a modular approach to technology that made it simpler to replace old components with new ones (Figure I). They were also four times more likely to take a modular approach to building user interfaces—making it easier to add new features or update old ones (Figures J1 and J2). Low-performing organizations were hampered by legacy systems that made change difficult or impossible. For them, technology was a strategic roadblock.

However, the average age of high- and low-performing organizations was similar (44 and 46 years, respectively), so we can't put this down to the high-performing companies being young startups with less technical legacy. High-performing companies managed to avoid building 'technical debt'.

We believe this is the result of an accumulation of decisions. High-performing organizations continually focus on the outcomes for colleagues (in using and maintaining systems) and customers (in getting the outcomes they want). This leads to technology choices that work well together and are easy to update. By prioritizing cost or political considerations, low-performing organizations make it hard for software architects to stick to a clear strategy—instead creating layers of workarounds that are hard to untangle.

The responses in our study highlight the ease with which highly-mature organizations were able to update their technology–which likely contributed to the speed with which they were able to make customer-facing changes.

Key points

- High-maturity organizations focus on the outcomes of their choices of tools for their staff and their customers. This includes technology, as well as their supplier infrastructure.
- High-maturity organizations have the strategic discipline to develop flexible, modular systems.
- This is a key factor in improving the speed with which organizations can update and improve their customer experience.

FIGURE I

Which of these describe how you make significant changes to your system architecture?

	High maturity	Low maturity
Our systems architecture enables new services and products to be developed, changes to be made or components to be switched without significant risk	63%	13%
Significant changes are difficult due to legacy system and technical debt	36%	68%
Significant changes are impossible without introducing a new system	0%	18%
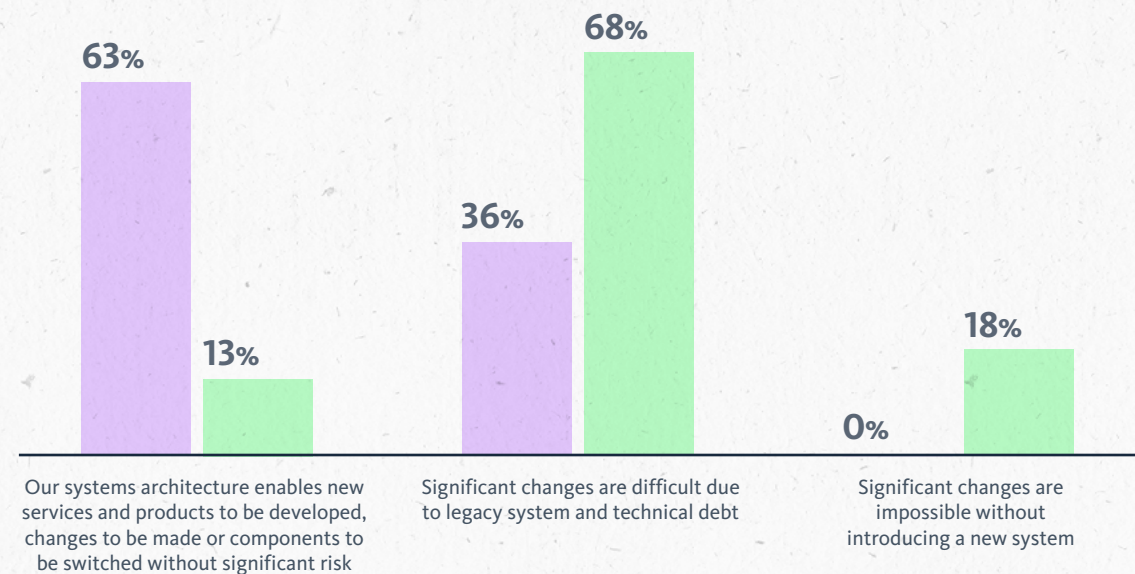
FIGURE J1

Typically, how are the pages of your website/app put together?

	High maturity	Low maturity
Component based, full design system	85%	15%
Templates that re-use some components	20%	45%
Unique templates that don't share any components	0%	25%
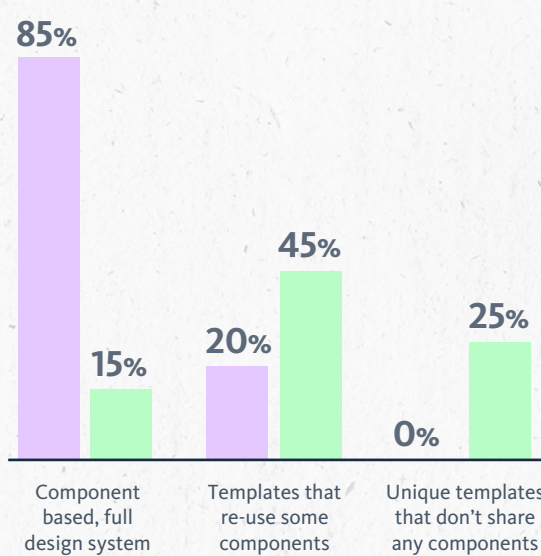
FIGURE J2

Generally, how long does it take to make a quick fix change to a specific part of an interface?

	High maturity	Low maturity
Days	70%	45%
Weeks	20%	50%

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity

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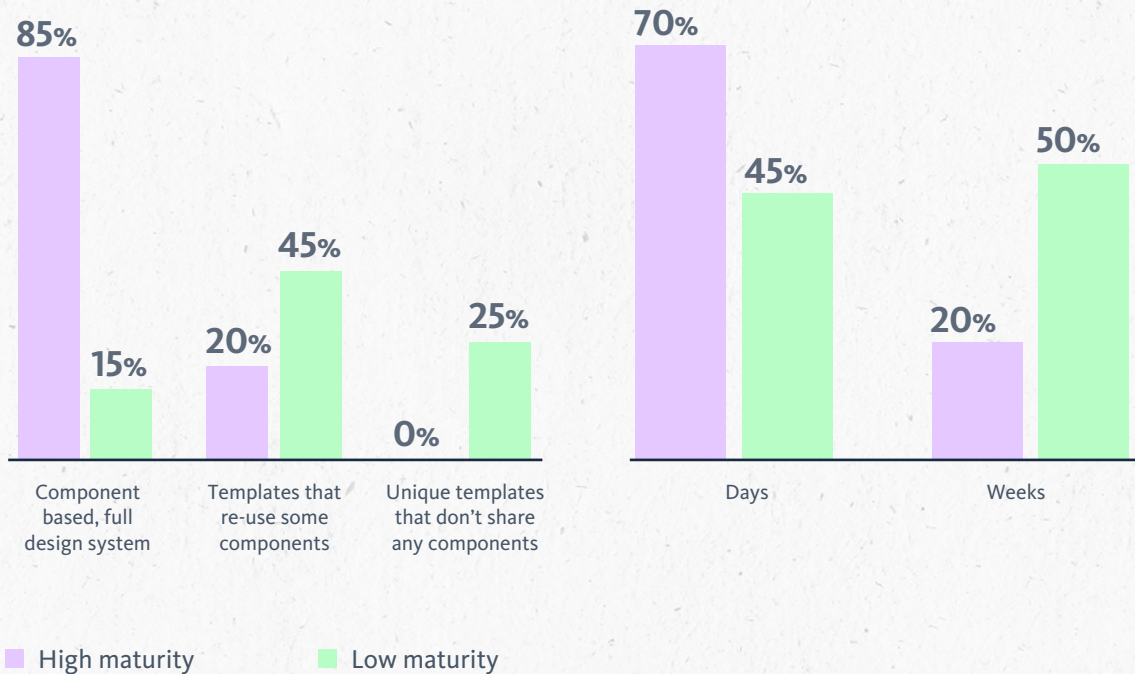
Adopt a customer centric org chart

Open specialist roles that deliver strategic work, and ensure all parts of the organization are connected to customers.

The highest-performing organizations in our study were more likely to have specialist roles in place to understand customers and convert those insights into products and services (Figure K). Low-performing organizations had fewer such roles in place. Those that they did have were more skewed to tactical activities like optimization, rather than strategic roles like product managers. As Remi Guyot of BlaBlaCar, says: "If you say you care about your customers, but actually you have a tiny team, then it's going to be hard to deliver for customers."

With more user researchers available, it was far easier for high-performing organizations to embed them within every product team. High-performing organizations were almost five times as likely as low-performing organizations to have specialist user researchers embedded within product teams. This was a clear differentiator between high- and low-performing organizations (Figure L).

High-performing organizations also tended to employ service designers whose job it is to think about how the organization's products and touchpoints fit into customers' lives (Figure M).

FIGURE K
What roles are present in your organization?

	Service design	Content design & strategy	User research	Product management	UI design	Optimisation
High maturity	60%	70%	71%	74%	84%	89%
Low maturity	27%	27%	36%	24%	40%	56%
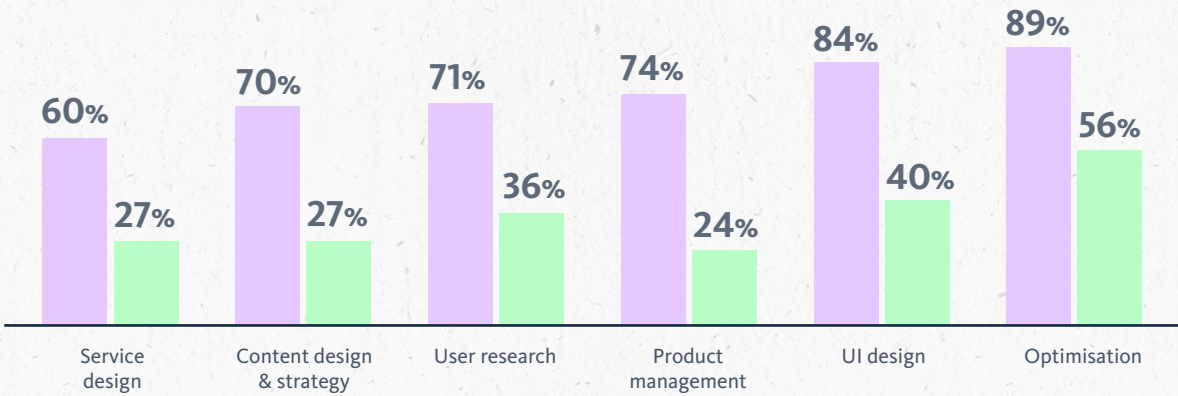
FIGURE L
Specialist user researchers are active members in every product development team

High maturity	Low maturity
70%	10%

FIGURE M
Service design roles

	Specialist service designer(s) take ownership of the design of end to end services	The company tends to focus on product development so do not have service design roles
High maturity	40%	18%
Low maturity	0%	50%

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity

However, we didn't only identify differences in the number of customer-focused roles. We also saw differences in the way those roles worked, individually and collective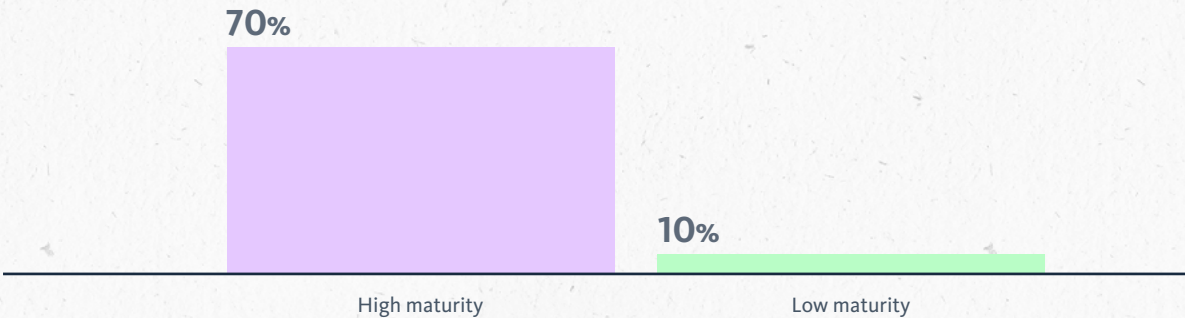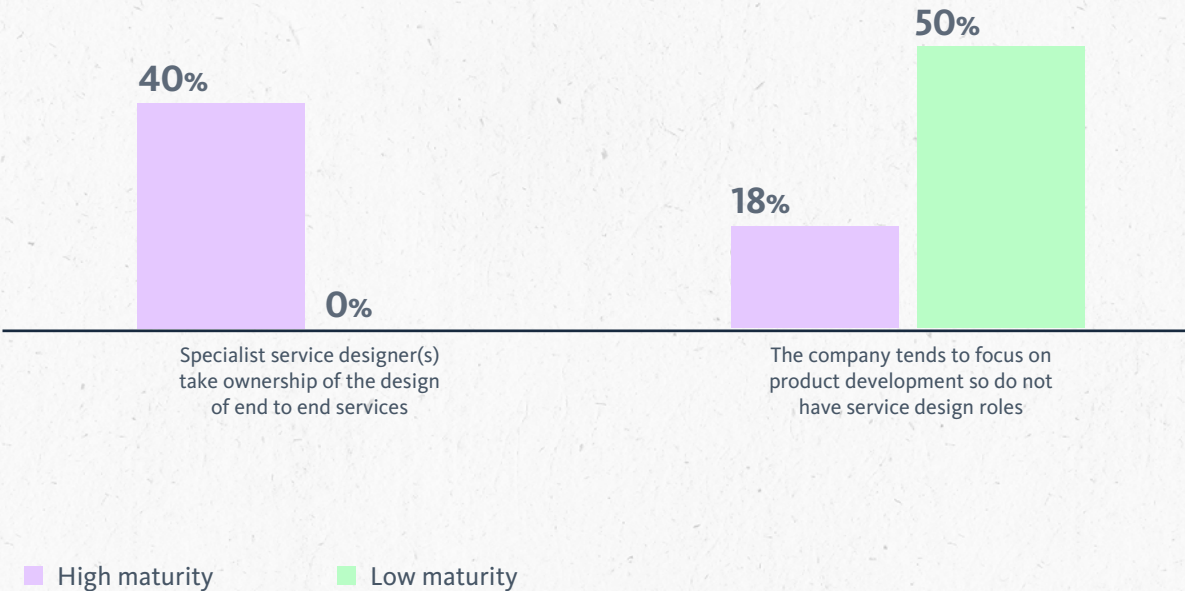ly. For instance, high-performing organizations were far more likely to see product management as a highly autonomous, strategic, and customer focused role. Low-performing organizations either expected product management decisions to be made by other managers, or product managers were primarily employed in reactive, fire-fighting activities (Figure N).

High-performing organizations also managed to break through silos, with delivery teams operating as cross-functional teams. Low-performing organizations were far more likely to manage their teams as production lines where specialists have fewer opportunities to collaborate on solutions (Figure O). Breaking through silos implies a degree of 'matrix management' where people can be managed around project objectives as well as functional specialisms.

We think it's possible to look at an organization's org chart and estimate how customer centric it is. Organizations with specialist customer researchers and product managers operating in a matrix where they can bring together cross-functional teams to solve customer problems, are more likely to have high customer maturity than those where silos dominate.
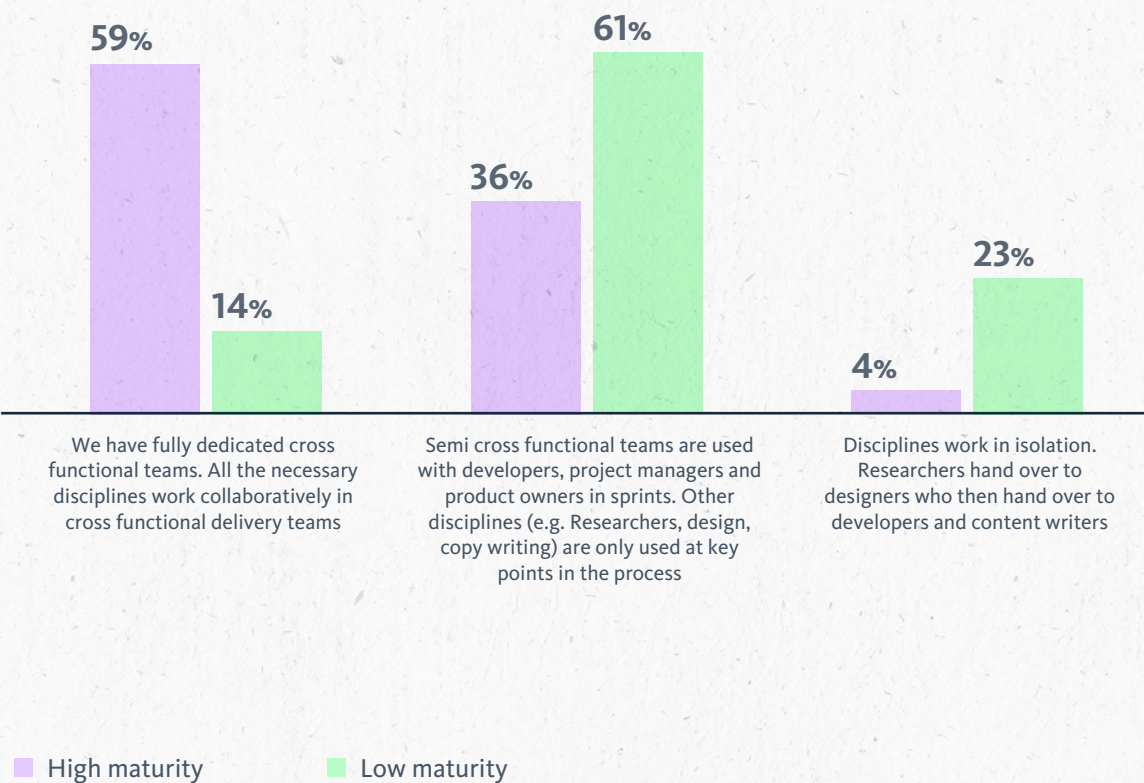
Key points

- High-performing organizations have a larger number of specialist roles focused on understanding their customers.

- They are more likely to give people with those roles autonomy to make strategic decisions.

- Teams have the ability to collaborate across silos— requiring a degree of matrix management.

FIGURE N
Product management roles

	High maturity	Low maturity
Product owners have autonomy. They are responsible for services as the customer sees them. A key part of their role is product strategy	59%	0%
Product managers' main role is to maintain backlogs based on the decisions of higher up positions. Their primary focus is tactical updates to products with a secondary focus on strategic product development	36%	36%
Product managers have no clear direction or empowerment to make decisions. Majority of their role is reactive and operational (fire fighting)	0%	40%
No specialist product managers. This role is taken on by other people	4%	13%

FIGURE O
How are project delivery teams structured?

	High maturity	Low maturity
We have fully dedicated cross functional teams. All the necessary disciplines work collaboratively in cross functional delivery teams	59%	14%
Semi cross functional teams are used with developers, project managers and product owners in sprints. Other disciplines (e.g. Researchers, design, copy writing) are only used at key points in the process	36%	61%
Disciplines work in isolation. Researchers hand over to designers who then hand over to developers and content writers	4%	23%

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity

5 # Communicate relentlessly

Create a culture that expects highly regular, highly effective communications so that teams can coordinate their work towards the goals that matter.
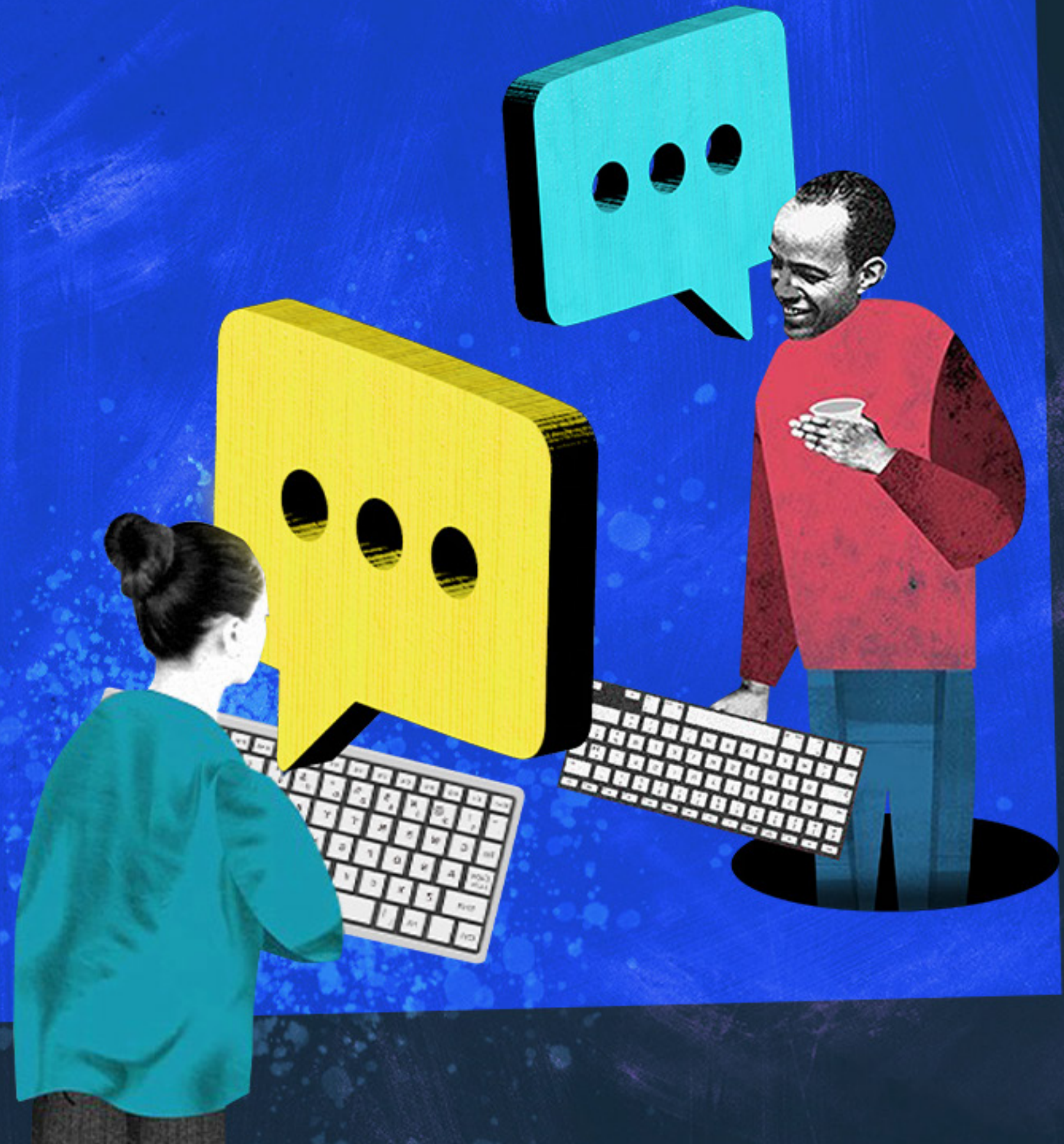
The communication dimension assesses how well everyone understands the strategy (top-down), what fellow team members are doing (peer-to-peer), and the reality on the ground (bottom-up). The strongest differentiator between high-performing organizations and low-performing organizations was communication (Figure P). More than skills, process, governance, and facilities, it's communication that seemed to drive performance. Teams in high-performing organizations were more likely to be aware of how their projects fitted with the wider strategy and the other work that was going on in the organization. Teams in low-performing organizations were far less informed (Figure Q).

Several high-performing organizations we spoke to told us that they had brought strategy to life through their CEOs telling customer stories. They described a day in the life of a typical customer and how the organization could help them in the future. This was a 'universal' way of sharing strategy that avoided numbers and business jargon, connecting directly with employees. This connection improved their understanding of the strategy, and shaped their behavior for months or even years.

High-performing organizations (65%) refresh this kind of communication loop by ensuring that strategy is woven into their regular communications to staff. Low-maturity organizations communicate less regularly, with around one-third determining that staff should be kept focussed on their tasks without fitting those into the bigger picture (Figure R). We think this top-down communication boosts employee satisfaction as staff can see how their work contributes to the organization's overall direction.

FIGURE P

Average scores in each dimension

	People	Process	Facilities	Governance	Communication
High maturity	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.1	5.1
Low maturity	2.8	2.96	2.96	2.95	2.3

FIGURE Q

How aware are different project teams of the wider organization?

	Teams aware of each other's work and aligned on broader strategic goals	Teams aware of each other's work, but there's no alignment on broader strategic goals	Teams focus on their own projects and objectives
High maturity	90%	10%	0%
Low maturity	5%	45%	50%
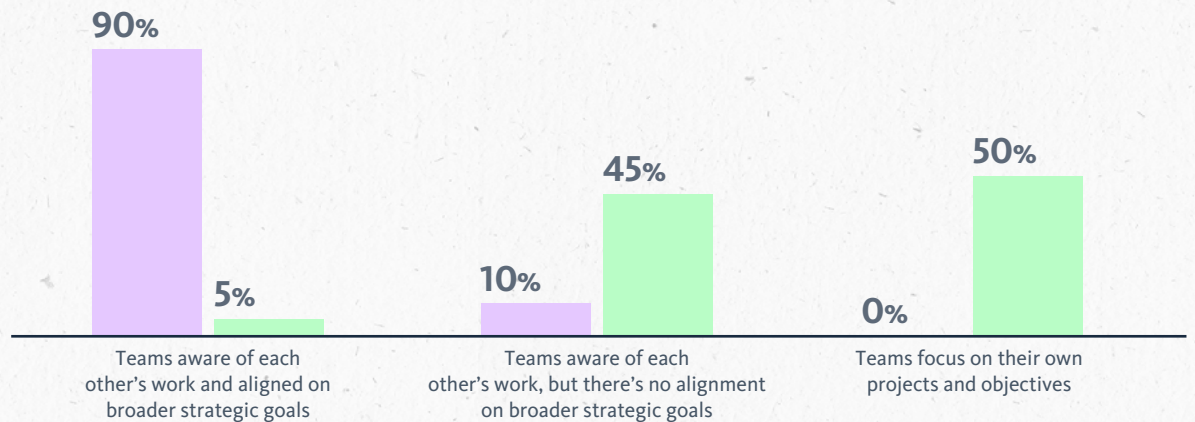
FIGURE R

How is the organization's strategic direction communicated around the business?

	Strategic themes are present in all communications and embedded in employee training	Specific communications about strategic direction are sent out periodically	Staff need to know their own specific project or department objectives, not the broader strategic direction
High maturity	65%	35%	0%
Low maturity	0%	65%	35%

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity
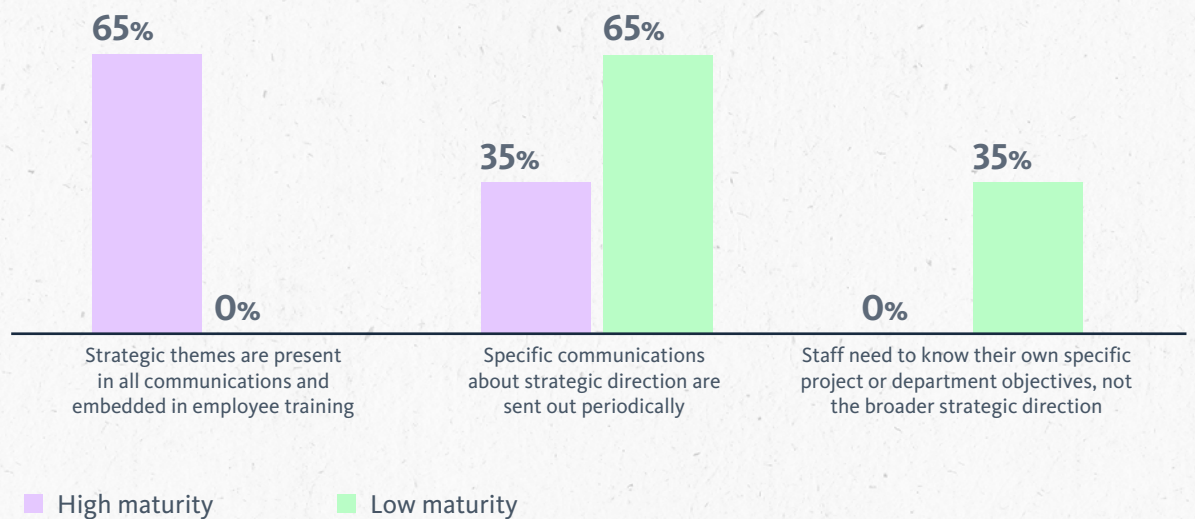
Sharing information about customers

90% of high-performing organizations make a habit of sharing customer insights (Figure S). We think that sharing customer insights widely (to stakeholders and colleagues) improves the quality of decision making across the organization. One organization we spoke to made sure that customer support staff spent time each month working with the engineers who were developing their services. This meant that engineers knew to prioritize issues that mattered to customers, and received rapid feedback when their enhancements went live.

Another organization we spoke to fostered links between teams to ensure that as one team identified best practices, other teams heard about them rapidly without management intervening.

High-performing organizations were also better at listening to teams on the ground. As we've noted elsewhere, high-maturity organizations were around twice as likely to make decisions 'bottom-up' than low-performing organizations. What we saw was not a fully 'hands-off' strategy but a balanced approach to decision making, implying a dialogue across all levels of the organization.
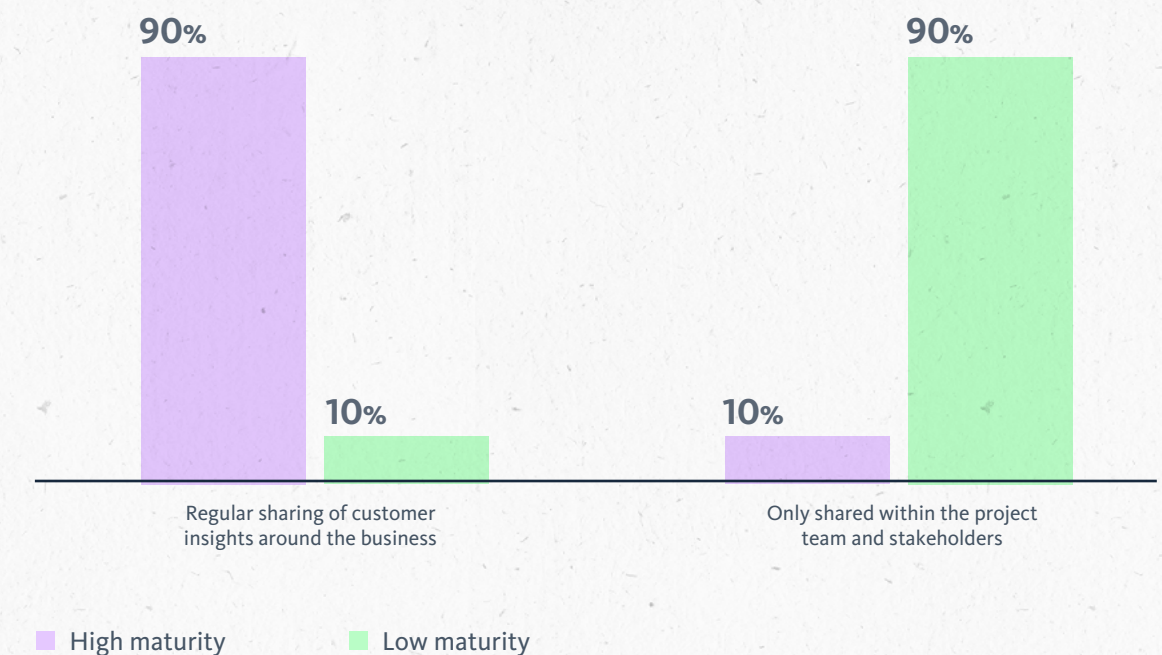
We think the improved quality of communication leads to better situational awareness and strategic awareness throughout the organization, and that this is the reason it's a critical differentiator of high-performing organizations. Even if an organization isn't advanced in other dimensions, if information flows freely, everyone will be aware of problems and opportunities and will be able to make better decisions.

Key points

- Communication is a key differentiator between high-performing and low-performing organizations.
- High-performing organizations ensure that teams are aware of the organization's strategy—often bringing strategy to life through customer stories.
- High-performing organizations share information about customer needs and behavior more widely, meaning teams learn critical information from each other.

FIGURE S

How are insights from customer research shared around the business?

90% 10%   10% 90%

Regular sharing of customer   Only shared within the project
insights around the business   team and stakeholders

■ High maturity   ■ Low maturity

Making change happen, now

Change is difficult. In large organizations, many people will try to ignore change - they would rather focus on something else. Some will even feel threatened by the possibility of change and will try to undermine it.
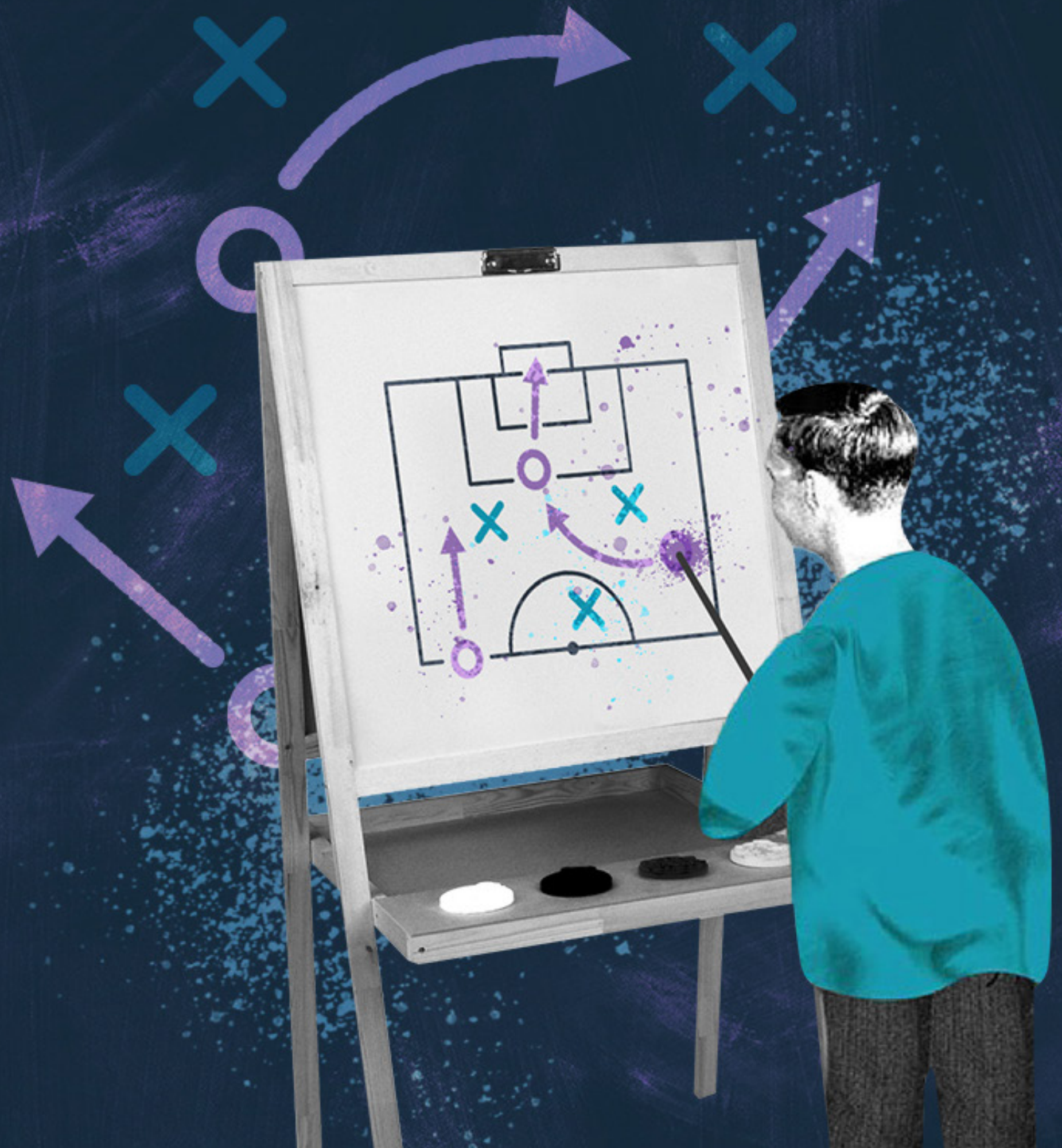
While difficult, change is possible. Some of our highest scoring organizations were ones that had run change programmes in recent years.

Here are *four steps* you can take to drive your customer centric change programme forward.

1. Make the problem visible

John Kotter's eight step change programme begins with creating 'a sense of urgency'. The organization needs to recognise the need for change and prioritize it over the everyday noise of business as usual. In other words, you have to be able to make the problem visible, by explaining the costs of not changing, the benefits of changing, and the precise nature of the change. Kotter says that for change programmes to be successful, they need to have buy-in from around three quarters of an organization's senior leadership. When you're trying to make the case for change, they are your target audience.

This white paper provides useful evidence that customer centricity is a solution to three significant business challenges: growth, talent retention, and organizational agility. You can take the customer centricity survey to get a simple score that helps illustrate how far your organization has to go - especially in comparison to its peers and competitors.

2. Involve people at every level

Researcher and author Greg Satell says that successful change initiatives need to start small, rather than with a big announcement. 'By starting with a large communication campaign, essentially presenting the initiative as a fait accompli, you are very likely to harden the opposition of those who are skeptical of the change.' Instead, most successful transformations 'begin with small groups that are loosely connected but united by a shared purpose.' Customer centricity creates a powerful sense of purpose - it's satisfying to know one's work is helping customers.

> "
>
> The cxpartners' Customer Centricity Model has provided us with insight into how user centric we are across our digital business, and given us the guidance and next steps for how to improve.

Marion Roussereau,
Lead UX/UI Designer,
L'Occitane

Kotter points out that the 'coalition for change' is not exclusively made up of senior people. Satell emphasizes the importance of building up networks that will support change. Identify leaders at every level in the organization. Change requires support from people who know how the entire organization works - from the boardroom to the warehouse.

3. Pilot change

Large change programmes can become bogged down in complexity. They are also slow to yield results. Instead, successful change programmes identify small improvements that can be made quickly - within a matter of weeks - and that will yield tangible results. This gives confidence to the change agents, creates success stories that spread, and wins over neutrals. Once change is tangible and present, it feels less difficult to everyone.

4. Keep working on your roadmap

Change shouldn't stop with a single project or initiative. If the organization stops after its early wins, then it is likely to slide backwards as old practices reassert themselves and new knowledge is quickly forgotten. The high-performing organizations we spoke to all had customer centricity as part of their identity and were constantly finding new ways to improve. It's important, therefore, to have a roadmap that identifies and prioritises areas for change. That roadmap requires management - agreeing specific changes, setting deadlines, tracking progress, and adapting as the situation changes.

Our customer centricity maturity model demonstrates that at each stage of maturity (or each step in the roadmap), organizations will face new challenges - from integrating new skills, to creating new processes, to establishing new methods of governance. The five dimensions that underpin our customer centricity model provide pathways for improvement.
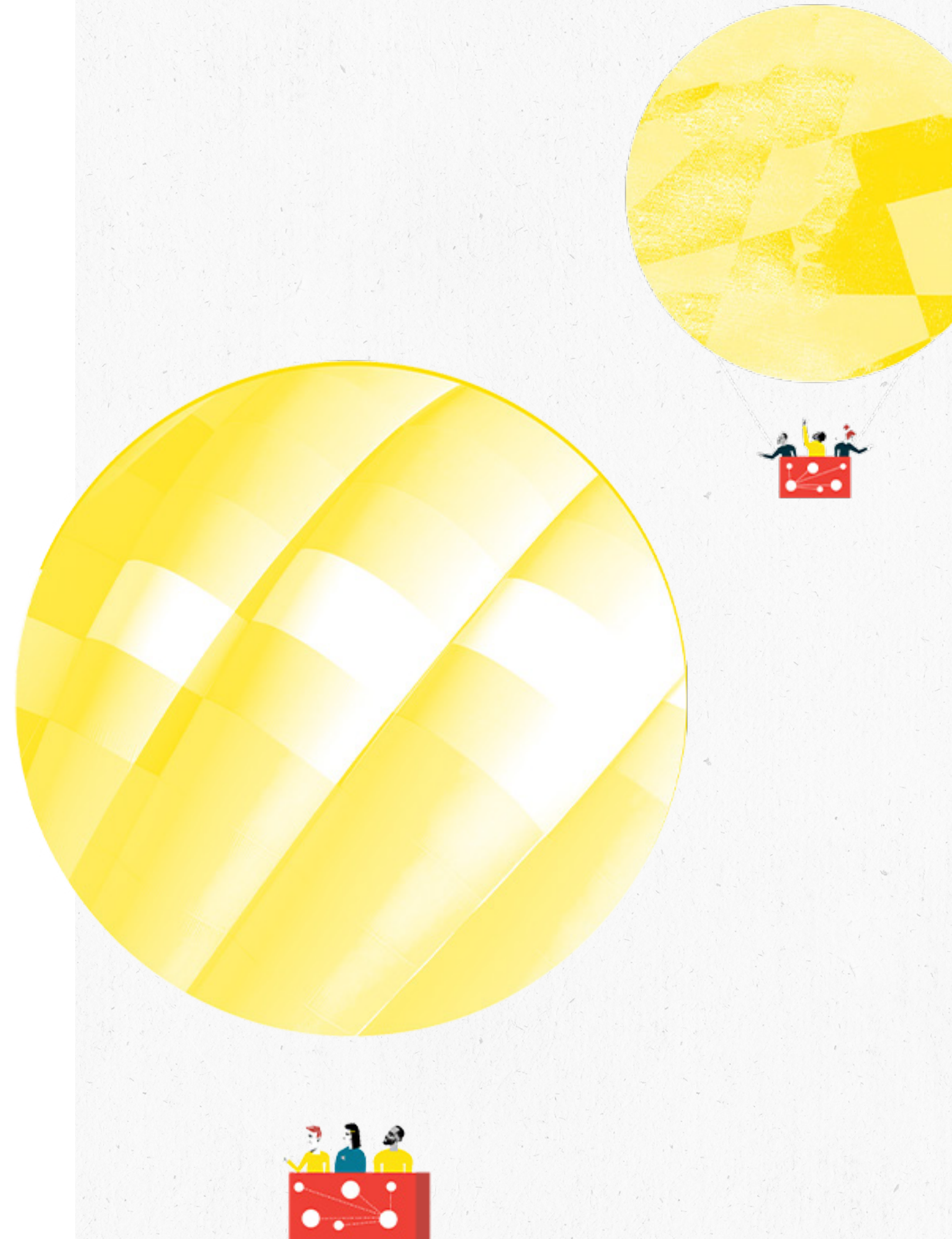
You don't have to do it alone

In crafting your message, piloting change, and managing your roadmap, organizations can benefit from bringing in external expertise that is seen to have a neutral point of view, that can explain what similar, successful change programmes look like, and that understand how to adapt best practices to fit an organization's unique needs. As a guide, they should blend knowledge of user experience, transformation and be comfortable consulting at the most senior levels of a company. Complete the customer centricity survey and share the report with them to discuss how they can help you land that change.

Begin your journey by taking the 30 minute customer centricity self-assessment.

Take the self-assessment →

About the authors

Steve Cable
Experience Director, cxpartners

Steve's depth of experience in delivering change through robust customer centric techniques was the driving force behind our framework for measuring customer centricity. With this, Steve created the study, developed the reporting system design, and led the data analysis for this paper.

His delivery experience comes from his leadership of large-scale user centered design projects for clients including Google, Public Health England and Boehringer Ingelheim. He does this by helping clients shape and deliver their own customer experience vision, supporting projects through every phase from Discovery to Live.

Using his deep experience of aligning business goals with user needs, he ensures services are simple, compelling, and customer centric. His work on Public Health England's Talk to Frank site was ranked Google's best performing site of 2018. PHE's CEO described it as "Digital Prevention at its best".

Contact Steve:

Linkedin

steve.cable@cxpartners.co.uk

Daniel Harris
Experience Strategy Director, cxpartners

Daniel architected the research study that generated the data in this report and provided numerous brands with access to personalized insights and recommendations to help them on their customer centricity maturity journey.

This was made possible through the insights he has gained from 20 years of experience in digital development and service design, including through the management of a large commercial portfolio at cxpartners which includes multi-year programmes of customer centricity and digital product design with SSE, Google, and British Council.

Interested in shaping the impact that industries can have on economic, social and environmental sustainability, he has a particular passion for improving the experience of employment for the world's best organizations, which he says is at the heart of efficient, growth-minded, and responsible business.

Contact Dan:

Linkedin

daniel.harris@cxpartners.co.uk

Giles Colborne
Co-founder & CEO, cxpartners

Giles developed the customer centricity model over a period of 10 years, basing it on the delivery methodology he employed on several large scale user centered design transformation programmes including Nationwide, Leeds Building Society and HCE Healthcare UK.

Giles co-founded cxpartners in 2004 and has spent his career helping organizations to adopt practices that will make them more customer centered. As head of practice, he has developed cxpartners' strength in research, design and development and created a team of highly proficient and effective practitioners. Following acquisition and integration with IT services company Sopra Steria, he also leads the UK business consulting practice.

He's also the author of best-selling design book 'Simple and Usable' published by Pearson in the United States and now in its second edition.

Contact Giles:

Linkedin

giles.colborne@cxpartners.co.uk

About the reviewers

Rupert Whitehead

Rupert is in Google's Go To Market team in EMEA, responsible for creating better experiences on the web and in apps. He works closely with partners and a community of Google specialists in the region to drive adoption of best practice. In this role he has seen the importance of having the right customer centric culture for good user experiences to flourish and commissioned the research.

He has had extensive experience in a range of roles. Prior to the Google Go To Market team he has worked on Developer Relations in Google, Technology Marketing in Nokia, Program and account management in Symbian and business analysis in ecsoft.

Peter Merholtz

Peter Merholz works at the intersection of design, technology, and humans and is one of the design industry's most respected voices. His career began as a web developer at Studio Archetype, one of the first design firms to take digital media seriously before becoming Head of Design for Epinions.com, an iconic early dot.com startup. He struck out on his own, co-founding Adaptive Path, the premier user experience consultancy, leading it for over 10 years.

Since leaving Adaptive Path, Peter has run design teams at Inflection, Groupon, Jawbone, and Snagajob and consulted with OpenTable, Capital One, and Kaiser Permanente.

Peter is a compelling public speaker, author and event host on all aspects of professional design. In 2016 he co-wrote Org Design for Design Orgs, still the premier book on building in-house design teams.

Andy Budd

Andy is a well known design leader, conference speaker, advisor and coach. He founded Clearleft—one of the first UX agencies in Europe. He was also responsible for dConstruct—the UK's first design conference, UX London –Europe's first and longest-running UX conference, and Leading Design –a community and conference for heads, directors, and VPs of design.

Andy sold Clearleft to his team back in 2020 and is currently mixing his time between coaching design leaders and supporting start-up founders at Seedcamp—Europe's most successful early-stage Venture Fund—where he's recently taken on the role as Venture Partner.

Bethany Jeroussie

As VP of Customer Centered Design at BP, Bethany is leading a team of designers who are delivering the digital roadmap for some of BP's most exciting and future facing business areas, creating solutions that are reshaping people's behaviors and attitudes to mobility and energy, and helping to make BP's net zero ambition a reality.

Bethany has been working in digital for over 25 years and in that time, she has been a web developer, UX consultant, researcher, project and account director, independent digital consultant, and Director of UX at one of the UK's largest banks.

Bethany is a member of the Invision Design Leadership Forum, a mentor and a frequent speaker on gender balance and inclusion in technology and design.

About cxpartners

cxpartners is the user-centered design consultancy of Sopra Steria, transforming organizations, services, and products by making them more customer centric. cxpartners helps organizations to become more successful, more sustainable, and better places to work by helping transform them to focus on their customers.

We have developed our customer-centricity model, based on our experience of working with Google on multiple UX projects in Europe, Middle East and Africa. It builds on cxpartners' extensive consulting across a broad range of clients covering retail, travel, financial services, healthcare, and the public sector.

Sopra Steria is a leader in digital transformation specialising in delivering end-to-end transformation and technology services that are executed at scale.

Get in touch to discuss the next steps in your customer centricity journey

hello@cxpartners.co.uk